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The moderating role of gender on the relationships between perceived paternal parenting style, locus of control and self-efficacy

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Abstract

The current study examined the moderating role of adolescent's gender on the relationships between perceived paternal parenting styles, locus of control and self-efficacy amongst 382 Malaysian adolescents (51% female). Results revealed that paternal authoritative parenting was significantly related to internal locus of control and high self-efficacy in adolescents. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that boys tended to develop higher self-efficacy in comparison to girls when they perceived their fathers as highly authoritative. The present findings underscore the importance of considering the contribution of gender when assessing the role of parenting styles on adolescents' developmental outcomes.

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Keywords: Parenting style; locus of control; self-efficacy; gender; adolescent

1. Introduction

Locus of control and self-efficacy are two important social-cognitive indicators that play important roles during adolescence because they influence adolescents' effort and resilience in the face of setbacks, as well as the level of stress which they experience in their life (Bernard, 2004; Bradley & Corwyn, 2001). Locus of control is defined as a tendency toward a more internal or external orientation (Rotter, 1966). Individuals possessing an internal locus of control believe that they can control their own lives and their future and attribute their success to skill while individuals with an external locus of control believe that what happens to them is determined by noncontingent factors such as fate, chance or luck. People with internal locus of control tend to indicate high self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy is defined as the beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated Levels.

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Such self-perceptions of capability are influential to the goals that people pursue, since they have an effect on the choices they make and the courses of actions they engage in. Many individuals with low sense of self-efficacy and who are relatively powerless to control their lives have been associated with a worldview that reduces the value of effort on the part of the individual with regard to goal attainment (Miller, 1958). Hence, beliefs about control and accomplishment or lack thereof have consequences for behavior. In raising internal locus of control and high self-efficacy among adolescents, it is important to study what factors contribute to the development of these two constructs. Parents are viewed as major contributors to children's locus of control and self-efficacy (Meesters & Muris, 2004; Pajares, 2002).

Warm, responsive and authoritative parents tend to foster internal locus of control and high self-efficacy, whereas disapproving, unresponsive and uninterested parents may encourage external locus of control and poor self-efficacy in their children. Parents who apply verbal reasoning and emotional support assist children to exhibit high levels of moral reasoning, self efficacy and internal locus of control (Baumrind, 1971; Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, Batenhorst, & Wilkinson, 2007). Therefore, parents have enduring effect on children's locus of control and self-efficacy throughout their life. Nonetheless, relationships between parenting and child outcomes might vary when adolescent's gender is taken into account.

Belsky (1984) draws attention to the role of child's gender as a determinant of parenting behavior. He mentioned that adolescent's gender is one of the factors which will help to elucidate why parents behave the way they do, and the subsequent influence on their adolescents' outcomes. However, previous studies have generally investigated the direct relationships between parenting styles with adolescents' outcomes (Juang & Silbereisen, 1999; Cohen, Biran, Aran, & Gross-Tsur, 2008) and largely ignoring the moderating role of adolescents' gender on these relationships. Therefore, the main focus and contribution of the present study is to scrutinize the moderating effect of the adolescent's gender on the relationships between parenting styles, adolescents' locus of control and self-efficacy.

1.1. Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory believed that individuals possess a self-system that allows them to control over their feelings, thoughts, and actions (Bandura, 1986). This self-system accommodates one's affective and cognitive structures and comprises the abilities to symbolize, plan alternative strategies, learn from others, and engage in self-reflection. It also has a noticeable role in providing reference mechanisms for perceiving, and evaluating behavior, which rises from the interaction between the self-system and environmental factors (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, social cognitive theory concentrates on the ways in which people learn from observing one another (Ormrod, 2006). Environmental factors influence behavior however, cognitive processes such as expectations about future events also play predominant role. In this study, locus of control and self-efficacy have been considered as important social-cognitive constructs within the framework of social cognitive theory.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The current study extends previous research by considering the moderating influence of adolescents' gender on the relation between perceived paternal parenting styles and adolescents' locus of control and self-efficacy. In particular, the present study aimed (1) to examine direct relationships between paternal parenting styles namely authoritative, authoritarian and permissive with locus of control and self-efficacy in adolescents, (2) to determine if these relations are moderated by adolescents' gender, and (3) to assess the specific conditions under which this moderating effect exist.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and Procedures

A total of 382, 7-11th grade students participated in this study and they were chosen from the schools located in the district of Petaling. There were nearly equal proportions of male and female participants. Of all participating students, 242 students were Malay, 84 were Chinese and 56 were Indian. The fathers' age ranged from 35 to 65 years with an average of 46.69 and a standard deviation of 5.19. Each time before the administration of the

questionnaire, a brief explanation was given to inform the respondents on the objectives of the study and also on the content of the instrument. The backward-forward translation procedure was used in translating the instruments from English into Malay. In this procedure, two native-speakers of the target language translated the instruments and translation were checked by a third consultant, then discrepancies are solved by consensus.

2.2. Instruments

The scales which have been utilized in the present study consisted of Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), respondent's locus of control (CNSIE) and self-efficacy (GSE) as well as demographic informations.

2.2.1. Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)

Perceived paternal parenting style was assessed via Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991) which comprised of three subscale namely authoritative (10 items, $\alpha = 0.73$), authoritarian (10 items, $\alpha = 0.75$) and permissive (10 items, $\alpha = 0.74$). In the current study the father form was used and each item rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

2.2.2. Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale (CNSIE)

Adolescents' feelings of personal control were assessed by the Nowicki and Strickland Locus of Control Scale (1973). This scale (CNSIE) entails 40 questions and statements are worded so that responses indicating an external orientation to locus of control receive a score of "1" and items indicating an internal orientation receive a score of "0." Thus, higher scores are indicative of external locus of control. Split-half method was utilized for the reliability of locus of control ($\alpha = 0.7$).

2.2.3. General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE)

Adolescents' self-efficacy was evaluated by the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) which includes 10 statements ($\alpha = 0.77$) and responses to this scale ranging from 1 = not at all true to 4 = very true. Higher scores on the GSE represent a higher sense of general self-efficacy.

2.2.4. Demographic Informations

Fathers were asked to complete a demographic form regarding their age, level of education and income. Adolescents also answered the questions about their date of birth, ethnicity and gender.

3. Results

Pearson Product-Moment correlation was used to examine the first hypothesis regarding the relationships between paternal parenting styles with adolescents' locus of control and self-efficacy. As it has been shown in Table 1, there is a significant and negative relationship between authoritative paternal parenting style and locus of control ($r = -0.24$; $p \leq 0.01$). It means that adolescents tended to indicate internal locus of control when they perceived their fathers as highly authoritative. Furthermore, positive and significant relationship was found between paternal authoritative parenting and self-efficacy ($r = 0.44$; $p \leq 0.01$). Interestingly, paternal authoritarian parenting had significant and positive relationship with self-efficacy ($r = 0.21$; $p \leq 0.01$).

Two hierarchical regression models were conducted to test the second hypothesis about the moderating effects of adolescent's gender on the relationships between paternal parenting styles with locus of control and self-efficacy. The first model was performed with the adolescent's self-efficacy as the criterion variable. Paternal parenting styles were entered on the first Step and they were significant [$F(3, 378) = 40.45$, $p \leq 0.001$]. Adolescent's gender was entered on the second Step and it was significant [$F(4, 377) = 57.75$, $p \leq 0.001$]. Finally, the interactions were entered on the third Step, and, taken together, the third step was significant [$F(7, 374) = 34.74$, $p \leq 0.001$]. These results revealed that 39.4% of the variance in the self-efficacy was accounted by these variables. Examination of the variables within the third block revealed that paternal authoritative parenting ($B = 0.50$, $p \leq 0.001$) and adolescent's

gender were significant predictors ($B = -2.63, p \leq 0.001$). One interaction including paternal authoritative parenting and adolescent's gender emerged significant ($B = -0.17, p \leq 0.01$).

Table 1: Correlation between paternal parenting style with locus of control and self-efficacy

Paternal parenting style	Locus of control	Self-efficacy
Permissive		
Pearson Correlation	0.04	0.01
Authoritarian		
Pearson Correlation	0.05	0.21**
Authoritative		
Pearson Correlation	-0.24**	0.44**

** $p \leq 0.01$

In the second hierarchical regression analyses the same procedure was used with adolescent's locus of control as the criterion variable. However, no interaction effects have been found between three dimensions of paternal parenting styles and gender in predicting locus of control.

Post-hoc probing with t-tests of the significant interactions was performed to clarify which of the simple slopes was significantly different from zero. This procedure determines under which condition, the moderator variable is significant (Aiken & West, 1991; Holmbeck, 2002). Hence, follow-up simple slope analyses were conducted for the interaction term. The significant relationships were found between paternal authoritative parenting and self-efficacy for both male ($B = 0.31; p \leq 0.05$) and female ($B = 0.19; p \leq 0.05$), however the relationship is stronger for male. In other words, boys tended to indicate higher self-efficacy than girls when they perceived their fathers as highly authoritative parenting (Figure 1).

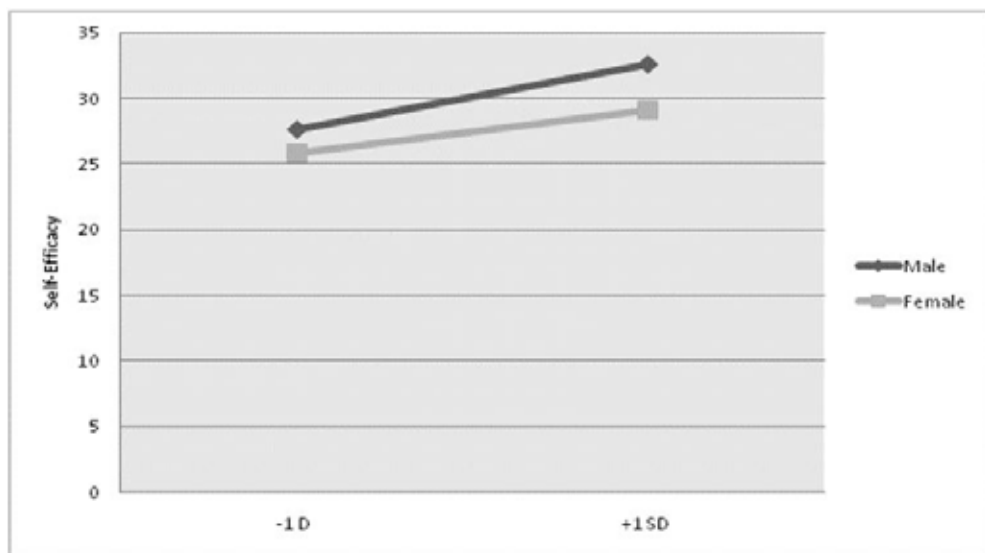


Figure 1: self-efficacy at two levels of paternal authoritative parenting and gender

4. Discussion

The results of the present study demonstrated that there are significant relationships between perceived paternal authoritative parenting with internal locus of control and high self-efficacy in adolescents. This is in agreement with

those of several previous studies such as McClun and Merrell (1998), Steinberg and Morris (2001), Marsiglia, Walczyk, Buboltz, and Griffith-Ross (2007) which indicated same results among different population. Interestingly, the findings indicated that paternal authoritarian parenting can be considered as a positive factor in fostering strong self-efficacy in adolescents. It supports previous findings which revealed that forms and interpretation of parenting styles could be illustrated by cultural context. Amongst Asian parents, firm control is not considered as a negative style of parenting (Bornstein, 1995; Chao, 2001; Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2009).

Additionally, it has been shown that the relationship between paternal authoritative parenting and self-efficacy was moderated by adolescents' gender. The result is consistent with the findings of previous researchers who found that fathers respond to their children on the basis of gender stereotypes and encourage their sons to achieve more but, admit dependence in their daughters (Snow, Jacklin, & Maccoby, 1983; Kail, 2010).

This study comprised of some limitations which should be considered in future research. Firstly, the results were based on reports of respondents who recall their parents' behaviors, which may have introduced potential biases into the data. Hence, future research need to scrutinize results directly from parents. Secondly, the present findings are based on paternal parenting style and need to be replicated with both mothers and fathers in future.

Despite these limitations, it is noteworthy that this study indicates the important role of paternal parenting styles which have enduring influence on adolescents' locus of control and self-efficacy. Furthermore, the current study would expand the existing literature by examining how gender influence father-adolescent relationships. The findings of the present study emphasize on necessary parenting skills to fathers with the aim of facilitating positive outcomes in their children. Essentially, consideration should be given to adolescents' gender in the design of interventions aimed at fostering necessary skills to parents.

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